



THE AWARDS

Homeowner category

• 1st Place—Saller residence

Professional Residential category

- 1st place—Joe Billings, The Landscaping Artist, Wlach residence
- 2nd place—Dean Alexander, Blue Agave Landscape Design, Amado residence

Judges' awards

- Distinguished Xeriscape Award, professional category—Joe Billings, The Landscaping Artist—Wlach residence
- Best Design to Attract Wildlife, homeowner category—Bradley residence
- Best Treatment of a Hillside, professional category—Roberta Braegelmann, Sonoran Gardens, Horton residence
- Best Use of Water Harvesting, professional category—Dean Alexander, Blue Agave Landscape Design, Amado residence
- Best Use of Chihuahuan and Sonoran Native Plants, homeowner category—Saller residence
- Best Revegetation of a Disturbed Desert Area, homeowner category— Kirsten residence
- Best Water Harvesting, homeowner category—Calhoun residence
- Best Entry Area Featuring Native Plants, professional residential category—Deb Butterfield, Horizons
- residential category—Steve Mallgren, Horizons West, Stout residence

Community Xeriscape Leader

Kimber Delorenzo

J. D. DiMeglio Artistry in **Landscaping Award**

• Calhoun residence

Special Lifetime Xeriscape Achievement Award

Warren Jones

So don't allow that "zero" sound to mislead you. The participants in this year's annual Xeriscape Contest, presented by Tohono Chul Park and the Arizona Department of Water Resources, certainly didn't. As you can see from the winning entries, Xeriscape is a concept well suited to Tucson, and one that provides inspiration for ways to save water—beautifully.

1st place, professional residential category & Judges' Award for Distinguished Xeriscape—design by Joe Billings, The Landscaping Artist, Wlach residence

"This landscape should serve as an example for the neighborhood and reflects where Tucson landscaping should go. Excellent work!"

The judges found this landscape intriguing, primarily due to its natural appearance and use of native plants. But it is more than that: Joe Billings, who designed and installed the landscape, likes to describe it as a "rainwater-harvesting, boulder-strewnstreambed, and natural-landscape garden." That may be a mouthful, but it represents how a well-conceived design can perform

The Wlach landscape has the look of pristine desert.

double, or even triple, duty. The water-harvesting aspect of the site is simple yet effective. Downspouts from the rooftop channel water into the garden's streambed. Runoff naturally seeps into the paved rock and decomposed granite swale in the front yard, irrigating an impressive assemblage of colorful native plants growing alongside: blue-

flowering mealycup sage, yellow angelita daisy, Baja fairy duster, yellow damianita, and red-flowering chuparosa, to name a few.

In the backyard, a grouping of 'Desert Museum' palo verdes adds vibrant color during spring and shades the west windows from the direct sun. Continuing the water-harvesting theme, each tree gets irrigated with runoff water directed from the roof via its own dedicated downspout. This is a garden in touch and in tune with its surroundings.









2nd place, professional residential category & Judges' Award for Best Use of Water Harvesting—design by Dean Alexander, Blue Agave Landscape Design, Amado residence

"A sweet garden ideal for relaxing with a cool drink."

The barrios of Tucson are well known for their traditional gardens. (In Tucson Botanical Gardens there is a barrio garden.) This home landscape emulates the barrio's casual, relaxed atmosphere using traditional plants such as fig, pomegranate, sweet violet, Indian fig cactus, and Lady Banks rose. Incorporating low-water plants such as penstemon and Mt. Lemmon marigold for color, as well as aloes, in-

creases the appeal. Add in the re-use of broken concrete for patio paving and pathways, a ramada constructed of mesquite limbs, and an adobe shrine, and the effect is complete.

Water conservation is efficient with the use of three large aboveground cisterns. They collect rainwater runoff from



One of the Amados' three water-harvesting cisterns

the house and garage. Manual valves at the bottom of the tanks connect to the main drip irrigation system and can be opened when they contain rainwater.

Judges' Award for Best Entry Area Featuring Native Plants, professional residential category—design by Deb Butterfield, Horizons West, Stout residence & Judges' Award for Best Irrigation System, professional residential category—Steve Mallgren, Horizons West, Stout residence

"A welcoming entry patio with a combination of trees, shrubs, cactus, and color plants."

A wide gravel walk bordered with rocks leads visitors to this home's entry. Native flowering plants line both sides of the path and include blue-flowering chaparral sage in late spring, red and orange bird of paradise in summer, and purple

plumes of Mexican bush sage late summer to fall. White blackfoot daisy and lavender verbena lend their color as ground covers almost year-round. In the walled backyard, a well-placed 'Brown Turkey' fig tree commands attention. It is a lush focal point in contrast to the natural desert's saguaros, palo verde, and cholla beyond the low wall. A welldesigned zoned irrigation system and passive water harvesting in the landscape help these homeowners manage their garden's water consumption efficiently.

Judges' Award for Best Treatment of a Hillside, professional residential category design by Roberta Braegelmann, Sonoran Gardens, Horton residence

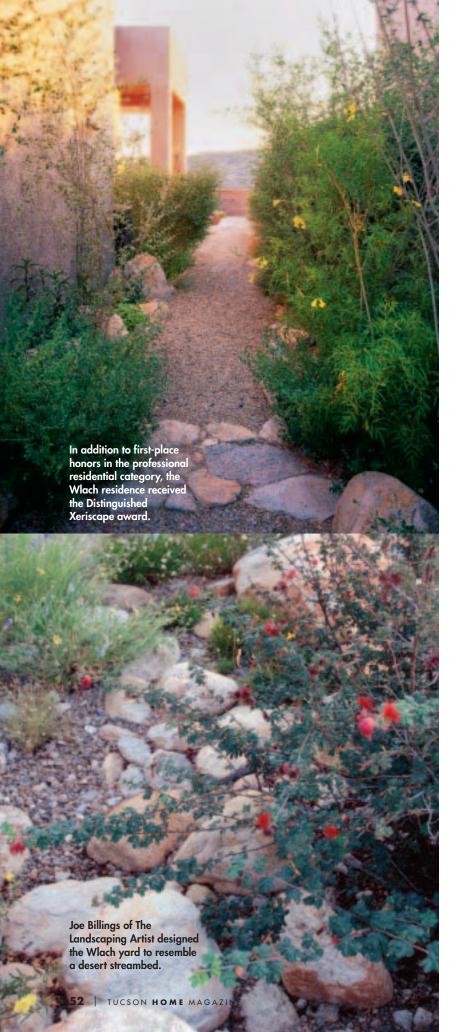
"An exceptional backyard that steps down to the natural desert."

As you approach this garden, flagstone paths direct you from the driveway and parking areas into an enclosed courtyard. A traditional tiered fountain provides an oasis for the eyes while two seating areas offer relaxation and a place to enjoy the sounds of water and the color of low-wateruse flowering plants-penstemon, damianita, red salvia, turpentine bush, blackfoot daisy, and globe mallow. Accent cactus and succulents, including several agave and opuntia species, as well as ocotillo and saguaro, add interest. As one judge noted, "This attractive backyard fits the shape of the land."

1st place, homeowner category & Judges' Award for Best Use of Chihuahuan and Sonoran Natives—Saller residence

"Nice, natural hillside...backyard has especially nice use of native plants. Very charming overall."

The judges were unanimous in their appraisal of this landscape. The descriptions "charming" and "appealing" came up more than once. Its owners and creators, the Sallers, who have worked on their landscape for more than 15 years, wanted to bring the desert in and up close. Local native plants such as saguaro, jojoba, palo verde, ocotillo, cholla, opuntia, agave, and brittlebush grow happily in rock-lined planters and natural areas. Numerous containers and pots located throughout the garden brighten the landscape with many color and accent plants.



Judges' Award for Best Use of Water Harvesting, homeowner category & J. D. DiMeglio Artistry in Landscaping Award—Calhoun residence

"Fun, creative, and imaginative! A low-wateruse garden with 'mucho' personality."

Scott and Deirdre Calhoun began building their landscape in 1999. It is, as they describe, "a deeply personal expression of our love for the arboreal desert we call Sonora." Both have what could be described as professional landscaping knowledge: Scott manages the Civano Garden Center, and Deirdre practiced landscape design for several years. They have put

their love and experience to good use, creating a garden brimming with native plants and personality.

Three goals were the guiding forces as they created their landscape. Goal one, the gardens would celebrate native plants. As an example, native annual



Colorful accents play a large role in the Calhoun landscape.

and perennial wildflowers add splashes of casual color throughout the year. Goal two, it would save water. Three large cisterns collect up to 1,500 gallons of water from roof runoff, thus the Best Use of Water Harvesting award. And goal three, the Calhouns wanted to live outside with style. An outdoor living room—complete with brightly colored furniture and accessories—allows them to watch movies and sleep outdoors in summer, and they enjoy most meals outside from spring through fall. All good goals, and according to the judges, all accomplished in style.

Judges' Award for Best Design to Attract Wildlife, homeowner category—Bradley residence

"Great use of hillside. This wasn't just work, but passion."

The westside landscape of J. P. Bradley is a winner for the second year in a row. In

2003, his landscape received the award for Special Treatment of a Hillside/Slope. This year, the judges awarded Bradley the Best Design to Attract Wildlife honor. The great variety and profusion of native plants provide lots of cover and habitat for a wide range of critters, which visit his landscape on a frequent basis. Most of the landscape plants were salvaged, particularly the cactus. Many were then propagated to extend planting areas.

Bradley tells the story of a dedicated and tenacious desert gardener in his own words: "The lesson learned in the 22 years of improving our property is to stick with tried-and-true plants that can survive the conditions of the desert. Instead of trying nursery-recommended plants, effort and money would have been better spent on building up the existing plant life and putting in more of the same, or being sure the new plantings could hold their own against the animals and conditions of the Southern Arizona desert." The backyard area is also certified by the National Wildlife Federation as a wildlife habitat.

Judges' Award for Best Revegetation of a Disturbed Desert Area, homeowner category—Kirsten residence

"A very lovely landscape put together by people who really like plants."

Beginning with an almost blank-slate landscape in 1999, Miriam and Ed Kirsten have transformed their far northwest landscape from bare earth (save a few mature native trees) to a thing of beauty. The landscape makes a smooth transition from home to the surrounding desert, utilizing a wide variety of plants, including native and adapted trees, cactus, agaves, and flowering plants. Special touches by the Kirstens include placing rocks and boulders around the house to prevent soil erosion and retain runoff following rains. Plants that attract wildlife are high on their list: You'll discover several salvia, penstemon, chuparosa, Mexican honeysuckle, fairy duster, and ruellia on-site. A water fountain (on a timer to conserve water) doubles as a watering hole for the local wildlife.

Scott Millard, a former Xeriscape Contest judge, is co-author of The Low-Water Flower Gardener and How to Grow the Wildflowers, published by Ironwood Press.

THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF XERISCAPE

1. Thoughtful landscape planning & design

Begin with a plan, whether it's a new or remodeled landscape. A good design will avoid wasting your water, time, and money. Think long-term and be realistic about the space requirements of mature plants. This will help you avoid maintenance headaches later on.

2. Select low-water-use plants

Many books exist on this subject, and hundreds of native plants, as well as plants from other low-rainfall regions, are adapted to grow in the Tucson area. Keep Principle 1 foremost in mind before buying plants for your Xeriscape. A good design is invaluable in selecting and combining water-efficient plants that will add beauty and utility to your outdoor areas. Call the Arizona Department of Water Resources, Tucson office (770-3800) for a free drought-tolerant, low-water-use plant list.

3. Appropriate turf (lawn) areas

Lawns use a lot of water. For that reason, include them when only a lawn will do, as in a children's play area. Keep the grassy area small and simple in shape, and border it with low-water-use plants. Select adapted grasses such as hybrid Bermudas. Avoid using lawns only as a ground cover—use other water-efficient ground covers instead. Inorganic mulches such as decomposed granite use zero water and can be effective in maintaining soil moisture as well.

4. Efficient irrigation

Drip-irrigation systems efficiently apply water to plants in the right amounts at the root zone. Use a timer and adjust schedules as plant needs change with age and from season to season. Check systems regularly to be sure they are working properly. If you water with a hose, learn the water requirements of all your plants—they can vary quite a bit. Check soil for moisture to see if plants actually need water. Avoid sprinkling; water the entire root zone (during the growing season) and reduce frequency of waterings after plants are established.

5. Improve the soil

Adding organic matter to the soil before planting increases its water- and nutrient-holding capacity, which improves plant growth and efficient use of water. Annuals, perennials, and vegetables—often planted in close proximity to one another—are prime candidates. Low-water-use native trees, shrubs, and ground covers usually do just fine in unimproved existing soil, but they often appreciate organic mulches. (See Principle 6.)

6. Use mulches

Mulch is a layer of just about any material—organic or inorganic—that covers the soil over the root area of a plant. Mulch reduces moisture loss through evaporation, insulates plant roots from heat and cold extremes, and cuts down on weed populations that steal water and nutrients from your plants. Add a few inches of organic mulch each spring—it will decompose to improve the soil.

7. Appropriate maintenance

Healthy plants grow and look better, as you would naturally expect, and use water more efficiently. Prune properly at the right time of year. Do not prune heavily at any one time, particularly during summer. Keep a close and regular eye out for pests and diseases. You want to spot them early when controls are easier and more effective. Keep up with weeds. Don't overfertilize, which can result in excessive plant growth that requires even more pruning.

www.tucsonhomemagazine.com FALL 2004 | 53